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OSA-0201-62

29 June 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Special Activities

THROUGH : Special Assistant for Intelligence and Liaison/OSA

SUBJECT : Compiled Data Report on Discoverer Cover Payloads

1. While it was then, as it is now, a somewhat speculative subject the likely benefit to be derived from a compilation of the data received from the cover payload experiments aboard the Discoverer satellites came up for discussion during the trip to Palo Alto in early May by [redacted] and me. After raising the issue Colonel Murphy arranged a conference for us with Mr. [redacted] LSMD. The latter seemed convinced that if all the data produced by the several shots were to be compiled and published in a single volume, the size thereof would lend credence to the impression that fairly tremendous payloads had been carried and would go a long way toward justifying the rather extraordinary number of shots in the Discoverer series.

2. Mr. [redacted] was also interested in various adaptations to the Agena vehicle to increase the capacity for mounting even more exotic payloads in the future. He gave us some charts and drawings related to these proposals. In addition he provided us with a sample of reprints which would be useful in compiling data for a single volume publication. All of these items are enclosed in the attached envelope.

3. I would say that as a result of this discussion Mr. [redacted] gained the impression that it would be useful for him to survey the problem of collecting reprints and unpublished reports from the various participants and ultimately give us an estimate as to the cost of such an undertaking. We have heard nothing further from him, however.

4. Later, this same subject was broached with Colonel Northman who not only saw merit in the idea but indicated that such a report could be combined with non-classified engineering data which itself would be an impressive argument for the size of the whole program as an R & D effort. Such a report, he felt, should emphasize the importance of three significant factors. First would be the development and testing of the Agena itself through several model modifications. He pointed out that it is

SECRET

more difficult to build than a Polaris missile which has required extensive testing. Secondly, the numerous shots afford an excellent means of exercising a world-wide tracking net which cannot be perfected without activity. Finally, the development and refinement of the recovery method (with its implications for other space programs such as Mercury), obviously requires much trial and error to perfect.

5. Manifestly, the above considerations are pointless so long as the whole program is veiled and portends to remain under the shroud of military secrecy. However, against the time that the veil might be suddenly rent (there is restlessness among the legislators) it may be prudent to take some steps now, at least similar to those proposed above.

6. Actually, Mr. [redacted] and I feel that the same purpose may be accomplished more simply if we begin now to (1) identify all the participants (unknown to SAIL/COVER) in this phase of the Discoverer program, (2) obtain from them all reprints and copies of data that have been published, and (3) ensure that reports have been and are being made in some form on all data received from these experiments. This approach would be short of publishing a combined volume which, upon closer inspection, would hardly be useful to anyone other than OSA and in our hands would be too obvious. On the other hand a collection of the many reports, combined with the engineering data suggested by Colonel Worthman, might well stand us in good stead at some future date.

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Att - envelope

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